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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the need for collaboration among four-year teacher education institutions and two-year community colleges in order to reduce teacher shortages and increase the number of potential educators who complete a professional education program. Obstacles to a collaborative teacher education program include a possible loss of credits for students who transfer to four-year institutions, a perceived variance in standards and accountability between two- and four-year programs, and the need for four-year institutions to formalize relationships with local public schools or districts before developing relationships with community colleges. However, collaboration in the form of jointly developed programs is critical in developing the standards-based programs needed to produce effective teachers. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) institutions should promote community college programming as an integral component of teacher preparation, develop agreements between two- and four-year programs, and embrace community colleges into the larger education community, with systems promoting joint faculty development programs. State departments of education should promote activity and agreements between two- and four-year colleges, provide incentives and funding for programs that foster partnerships, and hold two-year teacher education programs to the same standards as four-year institutions. (Contains 16 references.) (CB)

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The Community College Role in Teacher Education

A CASE FOR COLLABORATION

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AACTE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

An Issue Paper of the
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for Teacher Education

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Attracting, preparing, and retaining high-quality preschool through 12th grade (P-12) teachers are critical needs of our nation. There is a consensus that highly "qualified" teachers are what matter most in determining student learning; indeed, William Sanders' studies on the effects of high-quality teaching are part of today's political discourse. But high teacher attrition (29% in the first year) and growing teacher retirements, from an aging workforce, require that two million teachers in this decade will need to be replaced. Another four hundred to five hundred thousand teachers will be needed to grow the system to accommodate population growth and class-size reduction. Teacher shortages are acute in particular parts of the country and in certain subject areas–such as mathematics, science, special education, and bilingual education. In addition, there is a great need for teachers of color as well as for teachers in high-need schools.

The perceived inability of traditional 4-year colleges to respond to the quantity and quality problem has caused many to turn to community colleges for an answer. As they have for at least a century, 2-year colleges can and ought to play a role in the recruitment and preparation of quality teachers. Their involvement is particularly important in that over 50% of students of color begin higher education in these institutions. Community colleges enroll 42% of all African Americans and 55% of Hispanic students in higher education.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) has been making a concerted effort to work with and learn from alternative routes to teacher certification. Community colleges are part of both the alternative route system and the traditional system. This issue paper looks at the role of community colleges in teacher preparation and suggests ways in which AACTE institutions should work with community colleges.

Community Colleges: Part of the Solution

Community colleges have played an important role in the preparation of early childhood professionals and school paraprofessionals in nontransfer education programs. Many of the nearly 1,200 community colleges nationwide also have offered continuing education courses in technology for P-12 teachers. And given the ready proximity of community colleges to local schools, they are a convenient place for many teachers to secure additional course work.

Community colleges' other role in teacher education, however, has been to offer the general education course work required for teacher candidates in transfer programs. These programs provide a foundation in the humanities, mathematics, and sciences and often represent the only such courses taken by prospective elementary and middle school teachers. Many transfer programs at community colleges also offer education foundations or other introductory courses in teacher education as well as early field experiences designed to introduce prospective educators to the profession. A few offer methods courses in subject areas. Several states have authorized community colleges to offer a limited number of credits to meet state licensure requirements, some even approving as many as 18 credits of professional education courses.

Teacher education students in 2-year colleges face challenges that may not be present for their counterparts who begin their professional education at 4-year colleges. Because students in a particular 2-year college may transfer to more than one 4-year institution in the state, there are often problems

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with course alignment and the transfer process; general education requirements can vary by institution, and some states may not have a system for determining equivalencies across institutions. As a result, students in community colleges often find that not all their courses count when they transfer to a 4-year institution.

Another related issue is that curriculum and standards may vary between 2-year and 4-year programs. Students transferring from 2-year programs may find themselves lacking particular courses or content compared with their 4-year counterparts. Not only do transferring students face course credit equivalency challenges, sometimes they also face substantive knowledge challenges.

Some 2-year colleges do not have articulation or other agreements with 4-year colleges in their geographical area. Consequently, prospective teachers may transfer out of community colleges before completing the 2-year degree, fearing loss of credits if they remain at the 2-year institution. In addition, a number of 2-year college students are nontraditional adult learners who may be "place-bound" and cannot attend a 4-year institution far away from home.

Finally, the requirement in the recently enacted No Child Left Behind legislation that paraprofessionals must hold at least an Associate in Arts degree by 2005 will greatly expand the role community colleges play in teacher preparation as will the federal investment in early childhood education teacher training.

Tension Points in the Relationship

Although AACTE believes that the most effective teacher preparation will happen when community colleges and their 4-year counterparts work together to provide a seamless teacher preparation program for their students, it recognizes several tension points in the two types of institutions collaborating. First, at a time when most education schools have oversubscribed courses and more clinically based programs (with faculty spending extensive time in P-12 classrooms) and more work than faculty can do, establishing relationships with community colleges lacks "urgency": When a 2-year program and 4-year program agree to collaborate, articulation agreements, transfer policies, course equivalencies, and many other issues must be settled before a formal collaboration can begin. These issues take significant work and discussion that takes away time from the other work of the education schools.

Another tension point is that at a time of scarcity of resources, education schools are seeing increased investments in community college teacher education programs, which undermines their morale. Education schools are facing significant budget cuts and are often frustrated when money from the state and federal government is given to alternative route programs and community colleges rather than to their programs. Education schools need money in order to provide high-quality teacher preparation and face constant criticism because the public is not pleased with the quality of teachers currently graduating from traditional programs. They feel they are in a Catch-22 position as they will never have the investment in their programs they believe they need in order to graduate the best teachers.

While education schools are being held to higher and higher levels of accountability, there is a perception that alternative providers, including community colleges, are being "let off the hook" of accountability expectations. Education schools find themselves under the most intense scrutiny when it comes to looking at the kind of teachers they graduate. The most recent federal legislation places higher accountability requirements on education schools than on alternative routes. There is resentment in the traditional preparation community for what they perceive as unequal accountability requirements.

Further, at a time when education schools are expected to expand resources and build P-12 relationships (e.g., foster the creation of professional development schools), building relationships with community colleges is seen as a distraction rather than a help. The current focus on professional development schools is for 4-year programs to formalize relationships with their local public schools or the district rather than with community colleges. Community colleges are not seen as equal or necessary partners in the professional development school scheme.

At a time when teacher education is expected to focus on quality, including content knowledge, and many initiatives are centered on the arts and sciences' connection with and teacher education, it is difficult to accommodate the even more removed community colleges in the connections and to agree on what constitutes quality. This final tension point is related to the previous one. Again, the community colleges are on a low rung of a ladder of priorities for traditional education schools.

Community Colleges as Alternative Providers

One of the most significant developments in recent years is the emergence of the community college as a full provider of teacher education. A few community colleges, in response to the teacher shortage, are now offering full programs of teacher education for candidates who already hold baccalaureate degrees. These 1- to 2-year programs lead to full state licensure and include all the professional courses and experiences offered by traditional 4-year institutions. State recognition of these programs is assumed, and professional accreditation bodies are seeking ways to provide for their accreditation.

Policy makers are advocating the expansion of this role for community colleges in the preparation of teachers. The organizations that represent community colleges are promoting legislative approaches at the federal level that would provide resources to build teacher education programs. The Bush White House has been supportive of these initiatives. This support, in turn, has fostered resentment on the part of traditional or 4-year program advocates who see increased investments in community colleges as coming at the expense of needed investments in traditional programs. This resentment is reinforced by policy makers' efforts to make traditional programs more accountable–often without holding similar expectations for community colleges or other alternative providers.

Accountability Expectations

Accountability is a major issue for institutions preparing teachers. Title II requirements, NCATE 2000 standards, and state program approval policies all demand that programs in 4-year institutions demonstrate that their candidates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be effective with all students in our nation's classrooms. Thirty-eight states use PRAXIS, which includes a reliance on basic-skills tests and content knowledge tests. Teacher education programs increasingly must show

that the educators they produce have a positive impact on P-12 learning. As a result of this expectation, institutions are developing and implementing complex assessment systems that must be in place early in the candidates' careers. Teacher education programs are an interconnected series of academic and clinical experiences that prepare, challenge, and socialize candidates into a profession over a period of time in collaboration with peers, faculty, and P-12 school professionals. Many teacher educators in traditional programs perceive community college teacher educators to be both exempt from these accountability expectations and not conversant with the national student standards movement. Four-year institutions are also concerned about being held accountable for the performance of students whose general education and basic skills development occurred at other institutions. Given these factors, accreditation demands, and the pressure to show value added by their programs, 4-year institutions are sometimes reluctant to embrace their 2-year counterparts.

Recommendations: Collaborating to Prepare Quality Teachers

Given the crisis facing America's schools, however, it is imperative that 2-year and 4-year institutions work together to find sufficient numbers of highly effective teachers. Toward this end, AACTE institutions should:

- Promote community college programming as an integral and professional component of the larger system of quality teacher preparation.
- Develop one-to-one articulation agreements with 2-year institutions in states where systems have failed to forge linkages. (Challenge: Large 4-year programs, such as Illinois State University's with 30 feeder programs, will be especially demanding.)
- Develop dual admissions/dual enrollment programs with common conceptual frameworks and assessment systems for the first 2 years of professional teacher preparation.
- Embrace innovative models such as using technology and other means of delivering instruction. (For example, in innovative 2+2 programs, 4-year institutions are offering the last 2 years of preparation and a bachelor's degree in education at 2-year institutions through a combination of interactive television, on-line course work, and on-site supervision of clinical experiences in P-12 schools.)
- Develop strategies for physically taking 3rd- and 4th-year programs to community college campuses to enable community college students to matriculate absent relocation (2+2 on site, e.g., Towson University and Prince George's County, MD).
- Hold students enrolled in 2-year colleges and transfer students to the same standards as they do 4-year students.
- Embrace community college colleagues and make them a part of the larger education community with systems promoting joint faculty development programs.

State departments of education and the State Higher Education Executive Officers should play a role in forging collaboratives between 2- and 4-year institutions. States should:

- Identify areas of teacher shortage and capacity-building in each state to focus activity and articulation agreements between 4 and 2-year institutions.
- Foster statewide system interaction between 2- and 4-year colleges to determine course equivalencies across institutions in the general education component and in professional education (e.g., Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, and New Jersey have done this).
- Foster articulation and/or joint admissions agreements.

- Provide incentives/funding for innovative programs that foster partnership and seamless transition for students from 2- to 4-year institutions.
- Develop models that are appropriate for the state and region.
- Require quality assurance/outcome assessment/accreditation for all programs.
- Hold 2-year college programs to same standards as 4-year institutions in the preparation of teachers.

AACTE, as the major voice for teacher education, must play a role in bringing 2- and 4-year institutions together in advocating for quality preparation for all educators. AACTE should:

- Convene regional and national forums on collaboration between 2- and 4-year institutions focusing on quality teacher preparation.
- Identify existing exemplary models of collaboration between 2- and 4-year institutions.
- Disseminate effective models to institutions through a monograph or other means.
- Convene an Annual Meeting Strand to emphasize 2-year/4-year partnerships.
- Invite the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees, and the League of Innovation to cooperate with AACTE in pressing these agendas.

AACTE state chapters can also play a role by:

- Bringing together 4-year and 2-year colleges for work sessions to share programs and foster collaboration (Maryland and Missouri have done this).
- Disseminating articulation agreements and other models that are working to meet the needs of the region.
- Considering ways to embrace community colleges as part of state chapters.

Finally, there is a role for organizations that accredit and approve teacher education programs. These agencies should:

- Ensure quality of all teacher preparation programs.
- Hold all programs to the same standards, including those programs that "feed" students to 4-year institutions.
- Seek to expand their mandates to include community college preparation of teachers, particularly for the 2-year programs offering full certification or licensure programs.

Reducing the teacher shortage requires strong collaboration between 2- and 4-year institutions. Providing a seamless transition for prospective educators is key to increasing the number of those who complete a professional education program. Collaboration in the form of jointly developed programs is critical in providing candidates the connected, integrated, standards-based professional program needed to produce effective teachers. Partnerships between 2- and 4-year institutions will strengthen AACTE's member institutions as they continue to build even more high-quality teacher education programs.

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The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education provides leadership for the continuing transformation of professional preparation programs to ensure competent and caring educators for all America's children and youth. It is the principal professional association for college and university leaders with responsibility for educator preparation. It is the major voice, nationally and internationally, for schools, colleges, and departments of education and is a locus for discussion and decision making on professional issues of institutional, state, national, and international significance.

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20005-4701
Tel: 202/293-2450
Fax: 202/457-8095
Internet: www.aacte.org

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